



## **MISSION**

The mission of the New York Center for Autism (NYCA) Charter School is to provide individualized, scientifically based educational services to children with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders. The NYCA Charter School educational program promotes the achievement of high educational standards and the full intellectual, social, physical and emotional potential of each student. NYCA Charter School extends educational programming beyond the school's walls through organized outreach, training, consultation and support for students' families, and will offer ongoing professional development opportunities to educators in New York City and the surrounding area.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

NYCA Charter School provides year-round educational services, based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), to children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Certified teachers and supervised assistants conduct direct, one-on-one instruction at school and in the community, concentrating on the acquisition and development of social, communication, and academic skills. The program is supervised by a board certified behavior analyst who designs, monitors, and evaluates individualized instructional programs, including home-based support aimed at helping families and caregivers extend intervention strategies to domestic and community settings.

Housed in East Harlem's P.S. 50, NYCA Charter School has also pioneered a *Peer Mentoring Program* where typically developing middle-school students learn about building relationships and teaching children with autism. Peer Mentors have the opportunity to practice those strategies in NYCA Charter School classrooms on a weekly basis throughout the regular school year. The result is greater exposure to typical peer interactions for charter school students, and an increased awareness and understanding of children with autism amongst P.S. 50 students and community.



## **WHAT IS AUTISM?**

Center for Disease Control (2007)

*Community Report from the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network*

- The prevalence of autism is estimated to be 1 in 150 children.
- The number of children with autism has risen drastically over the past decade, but it is unclear whether the increase is due to changes in diagnosis or to a true increase in cases.
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that is part of a broader category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD), including Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS).
- People with autism present significant deficits in communication, have difficulty initiating social interactions, and engage in repetitive stereotypic behaviors (e.g., flapping hands, making unusual noises, rocking, or toe-walking). Each of these behaviors may range from mild to severe.
- There is currently no medical test or genetic marker for autism. A diagnosis is made after a thorough evaluation, which includes clinical observations, parent interviews, developmental histories and testing. Children are typically diagnosed around the age of 2½ to 3 years old.

## **EARLY WARNING SIGNS**

(Detected as early as 12-18 months)

- 3 Not making eye contact or responding to name
- 3 Significant delays in speech development
- 3 Not pointing, waving, or grasping
- 3 Repetitive body motions such as rocking or hand flapping
- 3 Fixation on objects, or not playing appropriately with toys



## **FACT SHEET**

### **CHARTER APPROVAL**

The New York State Board of Regents approved the charter for five years in April 2005, and the school opened its doors in September 2005. The school is authorized by the Chancellor's Office of the New York City Department of Education.

### **AGES & DIAGNOSIS**

The school is approved to serve 28 students aged 5-14 years old with a diagnosis of autism or pervasive developmental disorder in a year-round program.

### **ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

NYCA Charter School is a public school that gives preference in admissions to residents of New York City. Students are selected through a random, nondiscriminatory lottery process. There is no tuition.

### **LOCATION**

The school shares building space and collaborates programmatically around inclusion and peer mentoring with P.S. 50 in East Harlem.

### **CLASSROOM PROFILE**

Each classroom serves four students with one certified special education teacher and three bachelors-level instructors; the staff to student ratio is one-to-one.

### **EDUCATIONAL METHOD**

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is used in the design and implementation of all programs. ABA is considered the most effective educational method for children with autism (Green, 2005; Smith, 1996; New York State Department of Health, 1999; United States Surgeon General, 1999).

### **WHAT IS ABA?**

ABA draws upon behavioral science to design highly individualized educational programs that teach new skills, improve the quality of existing skills, and decrease behaviors considered disruptive to the learning process. Key components include the use of positive reinforcement and data for accountability purposes.